

Testimony
March 6, 2012
Joint Committee on Children

IN FAVOR OF : Raised Bill 5347 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REPORTING OF CHILDREN PLACED IN SECLUSION.

My name is Molly Cole and I am the Executive Director of the CT Council on Developmental Disabilities. The Council is a Governor-appointed Council which includes people with developmental disabilities, family members and professionals working toward full inclusion of children and adults with all disabilities in the community.

The Council is in favor of Raised Bill 5347 concerning the reporting of children placed in seclusion. The Council has worked for many years to reduce the use of seclusion and restraint in schools. It is our belief that these methods are used far more frequently than reported, and that children with disabilities are at very high risk of being traumatized and injured through the use of seclusion and restraint in the schools.

Seclusion means the confinement of a child in a room, whether alone or with staff supervision, in a manner that prevents a child from leaving. Under current law it is not to be used as discipline, or because it is convenient, or as a substitute for something less restrictive. It is to be used solely as an emergency intervention. But based on reports from families, we believe that seclusion is used much more frequently than reported. We believe that this bill will provide more oversight of the use of seclusion through the mandated annual reporting by the State Department of Education on the use of seclusion to the Select Committee on Children.

While this bill will not eliminate the use of such methods, it can both deter the use of seclusion and provide more oversight of the extent to which it is used. Preliminary data collected by SDE for the 2009-2010 school year shows that there were 9,823 of seclusion in Connecticut that was categorized as used in an emergency. This is a frighteningly high number, and we believe that it is probably significantly lower than the

actual number of instances of seclusion. There is a general acknowledgement of under reporting, since schools contend that they cannot distinguish between emergency use of seclusion that which is part of an IEP. The reporting is inconsistent, and leaves parents with little information, and therefore little recourse when their children are traumatized through the use of seclusion.

The Council supports this bill and believes that it is the first step in reducing the use of traumatizing and ineffective methods such as seclusion to address behavioral concerns in the schools.

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